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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001990

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SUBJECT: JORDANIAN FM STRESSES GOJ GENEROSITY TO IRAQIS,  
GOI AND DONORS MUST DO THEIR PART

Classified By: CDA Daniel Rubinstein for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugee Issues Ambassador James Foley briefed Jordanian Foreign Minister Salah Al-Bashir June 21 on his meetings with UNHCR and others in Jordan to assess the needs of Iraqi refugees. Ambassador Foley and Ambassador Hale expressed the USG's appreciation for the Jordanian government's generosity as it hosts displaced Iraqis, and urged the GOJ to find a way to allow Iraqis to work in order to support themselves. The FM said that Jordan needed additional support from the international community, citing burdens that Iraqis are placing on key infrastructure and social services. End Summary.

12. (C) Ambassador Foley opened his meeting with Jordanian FM Bashir by thanking the GOJ for the "remarkable hospitality" the country continues to show Iraqi refugees and its decision to offer Iraqis access to Jordanian schools and the public health care system. Foley suggested, however, that to better help the GOJ as it bears the cost of hosting large numbers of Iraqis, the international community needed a better understanding of Iraqi needs, including more information about the number of Iraqis in Jordan. Ambassador Hale pointed out that reliable surveys, whether conducted by the GOJ or international organizations, were important tools to gather this kind of data. Furthermore, UNHCR needs to be allowed to expand its access to Iraqi refugees. Approving UNHCR's request to do registration in additional locations across Jordan and through mobile units would enable it to reach more of the Iraqi population in Jordan. Foley noted that the information collected through surveys and expanded registration would also be critically important in preparing for when Iraqis return home. Security remains the number one factor when considering returns, and Foley noted that conditions were not yet conducive for large-scale returns. Now was the time, however, for the Iraqi government to begin preparations in order to be ready for returns in the future. When Iraqis are ready to return, the Iraqi government must have homes and social services ready to support them.

13. (C) FM Bashir explained that Jordan made an early decision to welcome Iraqis, and the GOJ will continue to do so until the Iraqis choose to go home. Iraqis access the same public service infrastructure in the health and education sectors, and the GOJ serves Iraqis as it serves its own citizens. In Bashir's view, since Iraqis receive the same public services, the protection offered to Iraqis is equal to that offered Jordanians. Support for GOJ public services provides assistance to Iraqis in a sustainable and integrated fashion. The FM reiterated that Jordan does not want parallel systems for Iraqi refugees. Bashir expressed gratitude to Congress, acknowledging that he was aware that the supplemental budget contained funds for Jordan in recognition of its generosity in hosting Iraqis.

¶4. (C) The FM said that he believed the number of Iraqis in Jordan was about 550,000, and that GID believes that there are about 600,000 Iraqis. At these levels, Iraqis make up some 10 to 11 percent of the Jordanian population and have the potential to cause "social issues," particularly as they put additional burden on social services and infrastructure in Amman where a majority of Iraqis live. According to the FM, the GOJ needs additional analysis of the demands placed on infrastructure and services to better combat fatigue within the system. These burdens are further exacerbated by the high inflation rate in Jordan. While the GOJ has been generous to Iraqis, the FM said that he hears much about what Jordan must additionally do for them. The FM's stance was that the GOI and the international community must do more to fulfill its responsibility to support Jordan and displaced Iraqis. The GOI's \$8M for Iraqi refugees in Jordan was simply not enough.

¶5. (C) Foley pushed back, noting that while rising inflation impacts all, displaced Iraqis do not have the right to work legally and are forced to deplete their remaining savings. Without the ability to work, displaced Iraqis cannot care for their families. Ambassador Hale emphasized that humanitarian assistance from the international community cannot meet all of the needs of Iraqi refugees. Permission to work would give Iraqis the ability to take care of themselves. Hale acknowledged that with the high unemployment Jordan currently faces, steps towards providing Iraqis the right to work in Jordan must be taken carefully in order not to generate strong negative public feeling. With adults in the work place, Iraqi children would be able to return to school

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rather than being forced to earn money to support their families. Additionally, Iraqis would feel more comfortable in Jordan, reducing their fear that they could be forced to leave at any time. The FM expressed some impatience with Iraqi fears, saying that it was time for Iraqis to start dealing with a government with some level of confidence. The FM told Foley that while GID believed that Iraqi children were not in school because they were working, he disagreed, noting that Social Service officials have encountered few Iraqi children in raids on business illegally employing underage workers.

¶6. (C) Foley told the FM that the USG continues to push Iraqi PM Maliki to do more to assist displaced Iraqis. The constant message is that the GOI has a responsibility to contribute substantially to assist the needs of its displaced citizens in host countries. Foley described his recent efforts to encourage other donor countries, including Gulf countries, to provide greater support for displaced Iraqis. The Gulf countries understand that the increasing vulnerability of displaced Iraqis in neighboring countries has regional implications, but criticized Iraqi PM Maliki and the paucity of GOI contributions to date.

¶7. (C) At the end of the meeting, the FM asked Foley about the U.S. policy on resettling Iraqi Christians. Foley noted that the U.S. was not looking to establish any special categories limited to a specific religion. The U.S. resettlement program accepts Iraqis who fled persecution because of their religious beliefs. There is a wide array of religious backgrounds among the Iraqi refugees already admitted to the U.S. and those in the resettlement pipeline.

¶8. (U) This message was cleared by Senior Coordinator Ambassador Foley.

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